

Billie Jean King Cup

Thursday, 14 November 2024

Team Great Britain

Captain Anne Keothavong

Katie Boulter

Harriet Dart

Olivia Nicholls

Emma Raducanu

Heather Watson

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome, everyone. Let's start the press conference with Team Great Britain. Please raise your hand for questions.

Q. Hi, everyone. First I'm curious, actually, what's it like being stuck in a hotel during a tournament? That's a lot of energy, so it must have been a lot.

HEATHER WATSON: Well, it was one of our team members' birthday yesterday, so we were nonstop partying. No, I'm joking. (Laughter.)

We actually did some yoga and some core sessions, and it's kind of good sometimes to have a forced break and lots of team bonding and birthday celebrations, chocolate cake, just a little bit.

But yeah, I think it was more concerning for the country seeing what they have been through recently, which is so tough, so it was scary, but I'm glad that it wasn't too bad.

Q. Emma, Happy Birthday. Tell us about your day yesterday and what it was like celebrating your birthday as part of the team.

EMMA RADUCANU: Thank you. Yeah, I'm really grateful that my team, they made a really big effort yesterday to make me feel really special. There was birthday banners, cake, balloons.

Yeah, it was really nice, considering the weather. We couldn't really go out or do anything, but it's just how it goes. Yeah, even though those were the conditions, I still had a great time. It was very memorable.

Yeah, I really felt a lot of love and from my friends back home, as well. I got a lot of nice messages, which was really sweet.

Q. Another question for Emma. We haven't seen you for a little while since US Open and since Korea. What have you been doing with yourself since then and rehabbing? Was this playing and joining up with Great Britain great motivation in your return to fitness?

EMMA RADUCANU: Yeah, it was. I think when I got injured in Korea, I didn't know how bad it was initially. I actually did it in my second round there and managed to finish the match.

But I ended up not playing for about four, five weeks after that. Yeah, I think the last three weeks has been a gradual buildup and return to play. I have done some really good work. I'm feeling good about my game in a place that I can try and compete and give everything on the match court, but it is quite different.

But I think in the meantime, with the time off, I was just trying to develop myself in other ways and doing other hobbies. I spent some time in China to see my grandma.

But yeah, otherwise it's just been full focus on trying to get healthy for this tournament. I know how hard we all fought in April to qualify for this, and yeah, I really wanted to be able to play here in the Finals.

Q. Just on your fitness, there was reports last week that you were in talks with Yutaka Nakamura, new fitness coach. Can you confirm that?

EMMA RADUCANU: We are having discussions. Yeah, we'll see. I'm looking forward for 2025 regardless.

Q. Nothing confirmed yet?

EMMA RADUCANU: We're in discussions.

Q. Katie, it seemed like you were in Asia forever. Curious what was it like having been there for such a



long time and then finishing it strongly? What do you take from that and coming into this event?

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, I think I got rewarded for sticking it out. I feel like I was constantly working to find my rhythm again. I felt like I lost it a little bit during the U.S. swing. You know, understandably I had gone through quite a few different things, obviously changed surface twice, which I have never done in my whole life, and I think, you know, full credit to me and my team for pushing me.

I continued training fully throughout the Asia swing, just hoping that I would kind of get it by the end of it, and thankfully I found it. I got a lot of confidence from those last couple of weeks. I think that will really push me on going into next year, because I found my level again. I know that's my level. Yeah, I'm going to hopefully bring some better level again next year.

Q. Katie, just following up on that, what specifics do you think you will be working on in the off-season to take you to that next level?

KATIE BOULTER: Yeah, I'm very excited for next year. I'm going to go all in with my team, and we are going to kind of think back to this year and change a few things. I definitely have holes in my year where I've got a lot of chances to gain points. I think clay season is going to be a big one for me next year.

I felt like it took me five or six weeks to kind of get some form. The match I actually played against Paula at Roland Garros was a really high level on clay.

Yeah, I'm really excited for it. I've got to go back to the team and decide what I really want to work on, but I know I can get to where I want to get to. I'm not going to give you any numbers to tell you what my achievements I want to make next year are, but yeah, I'm aiming high next year.

Q. Olivia, you have had a big rise up the rankings this year again. What do you think has led to that?

OLIVIA NICHOLLS: Found a good partner (smiling). No, I think at the start of the year I knew that I had the potential to climb back up and maybe go even further than I had previously done.

Yeah, just have a good team around me, been putting in some good work, and to be honest, playing a lot of weeks, because doubles with the format, you can have some weeks where you lose first round 10-8 on a tiebreak. So yeah, I've been putting a massive shift in. Also did the full seven-week Asian swing with Boults and was rewarded for that.

Yeah, just consistently putting in the effort, putting in the work, and yeah, I have gelled really well with my partner and looking forward to carrying that on next year.

Q. Harriet, what do you think about the two events being played, Davis Cup back to back? And a word on Rafa, as well. You see the big "Thanks Rafa" coming in here. What do you think of his farewell this next week?

HARRIET DART: Firstly, it was amazing we were able to use this venue after Seville. Yeah, I mean, it's going to be iconic with Rafa retiring here. I mean, you see all the banners and the posters everything where.

Growing up, you idolize someone like him. He's been so special for the game, and, you know, everything he stands by and the way he is on the court as a competitor, I mean, it's super inspiring.

We were just talking actually about, you know, how many times he's won Roland Garros. You know, every year you can hear it from players' area, they won't just say, what's it, 14-time champion, they'll name every single year, and you think, gosh, even with just one, you're amazing, let alone what he's been able to achieve.

But yeah, I think it's pretty fitting that he's also going to be retiring at home in Spain in front of a home crowd. I think that's incredibly special.

But yeah, for us, as well, it's going to be cool to be around, and hopefully we'll be here for as long as possible.

Q. Emma, on the fitness trainer, I appreciate you said you're still in discussions, but previously you said you wanted to keep your team really small. I wonder what's prompted the change of mind in terms of potentially bringing somebody else in?

EMMA RADUCANU: Yeah, I don't think bringing someone else in necessarily makes it large. I think my goal next year is to stay on court longer. This year, I mean, I came to top 60 in the world, but I barely played I think less than 15 events.

So yeah, I know if I'm on court and healthy and competing, I can go even higher and further. I think that my athleticism is a strength of mine, but it's nowhere near its full potential. I'm just looking forward to explore that further, and yeah, ready to commit to doing that.

Q. Anne, can you tell us the lineup for tomorrow and how difficult the decision was to make it?

CAPTAIN ANNE KEOTHAVONG: You'll find out the lineup at 4:00 tomorrow. (Laughter.)

Q. How difficult a decision is it picking the lineup from...

CAPTAIN ANNE KEOTHAVONG: In this competition, I think we have seen over the years, that anything is possible. I'm pleased that we've got the best team that I could have fielded for this competition. I've got five women here who are more than capable of playing above and beyond.

I think Katie and Emma in particular showed that in April. To beat France in their backyard on clay in that kind of atmosphere, the way they were able to rise to the challenge, it was, I mean, it was incredible. It really was. Outstanding performances.

We have seen that in previous ties, as well, from other players in this team. So look, no one here is to be underestimated. I don't want to give anything away yet (smiling).

Q. Emma, Happy Birthday. A question really for all of you but maybe one for you, Anne. You mentioned no one is to be underestimated. How do assess Germany as your first opponents? They also had a huge win to get here. How do you counter their challenge tomorrow?

CAPTAIN ANNE KEOTHAVONG: They are a team full of experience, led by Laura Siegemund. As I said, no one is to be underestimated. When you represent your nation in an event like this, we have seen players exceed expectations and really rise and perform.

So, look, they're going to be tough whoever they field. There isn't any easy match here for any nation. So no is to be underestimated.

But I do take confidence in the fact that I feel this team is as well prepared as possible. They're excited to be here. They really want to go out there and play. I do believe we are a team that can win this competition.

Q. Emma, what you said earlier about hobbies and other things when you were away from the game, anything in particular you did that helped you get away from it all? And do you feel this is the beginning of your 2025 season here now?

EMMA RADUCANU: Yeah, I think so. While it's the end of the season for a lot of players, I feel I'm just beginning to

kick-start and get things in motion, training really well, training hard, and already building towards next year. You know, I'm not really looking to have any more time off. Because of my injury, already had quite a bit.

In my time off, I did a lot of reading, picked the piano back up. I feel like whenever I'm with my grandma over there, yeah, it's a bit of a retreat for me and very far and opposite from what I usually do. I was very grateful for that opportunity, because I don't get to see her very often.

Yeah, I came back I think in quite a peaceful and zen mindset. Yeah, I'm just looking forward to competing here this week and taking however this goes and improving on it for next year.

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